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The Electrical Workers International Brotherhood

BY
D. W. TRACY
INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT, I. B. E. W.

Chief Justice Hughes made a statement some years ago that might be said aptly to describe the policies of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers over a long period of years. Chief Justice Hughes said: "To be conservative an institution must be progressive." The exact opposite of this axiom, namely, "To be progressive an institution must be conservative," also holds true. A labor union deals with so many different groups of human beings and operates upon so wide a scale that to be successful it must make its advances cautiously and in accord with sound social practices.

The life of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers is almost commensurate with the growth and development of the electrical industry. Within a few decades the production, distribution, and utilization of electrical power has become one of the biggest industries in the United States. More industries are dependent upon the unfailing supply of electrical current than upon any other single factor in manufacturing or transportation. Railroads, mines, mills, and factories use more and more electrical current each year. More electrical appliances are used each year in the homes and on the farms to do the work formerly performed by hand. Our comforts and conveniences, and even our means of livelihood, depend upon the men who manufacture, install, maintain, and operate electrical devices.

ORIGIN OF BROTHERHOOD

The United Order of Linemen, a predecessor of the Brotherhood, was organized in 1884, with headquarters in Denver, Colo. These men had been the principal factor in stretching telegraph wires across the continent in that great period of our industrial expansion. They established locals in several of the larger western cities but never made much headway east of Denver.

Meanwhile, the electrical display feature of the 1890 fair in St. Louis attracted Nation-wide attention. Some of the electricians employed at the fair had been members of the Knights of Labor, and others belonged to the United Order of Linemen. This group of skilled electricians drawn from many parts of the Nation was soon organized as the Wiremen's and Linemen's Union No. 5221 of the American Federation of Labor.

Under the dynamic leadership of its president, Henry Miller, the local began a Nation-wide campaign to extend its jurisdiction into the national field. Unions were organized in Evansville, Indianapolis, Chicago, and Milwaukee, and were shortly followed by organizations in New Orleans, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, and Duluth. These unions constituted the nucleus for the national organization which was formed in St. Louis on November 21, 1891, as the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers of America. A month later it affiliated with the American Federation of Labor.

FORMATIVE PERIOD, 1891-1908

Within 1 year the new national union had chartered 43 locals and had quadrupled its membership, but it was confronted with financial difficulties almost from the very outset. It had started life without a penny and was given a loan

of $100 from the St. Louis local. As is always the case, the new union also felt the severity of the 1893 depression. Membership fell off, and with a scarcity of jobs came internal dissension. In 1894, the secretary-treasurer had to mortgage his own household effects in order to meet the many pressing bills of the organization.

Nevertheless, by 1897, the National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers of America was on its way again, with a substantial balance in the treasury and a large increase in membership. Two years later it started a successful organizing campaign in Canada. So closed the first decade of the existence of the Brotherhood -- a decade fraught with difficulties, hard work, and personal sacrifices by the leadership and individual members.

The next decade was marked by the union's determination to adhere closely to the letter and the spirit of its agreements with employers. It was during this second decade that the so-called conservative-progressive policy of the Brotherhood was forged and developed. The Brotherhood continued to be aggressive in seeking out collective-bargaining agreements, but once an agreement was secured, the union was conservative in its careful observance of every provision of the contract.

INTERNAL ADJUSTMENTS, 1909-19

From a membership of about 500 when the Brotherhood was first organized in 1891, it had grown to about 13,000 in 1903 and nearly 24,000 in 1905. However, in 1908, when the electrical workers' union may be said to have been fairly launched with paid officers, a treasury balance, and a strong organization, it became involved in a bitter internal struggle. It was a costly experience, resulting in a secession of considerable proportions, engineered in part by hostile employer associations who wished to destroy the growing organization of electrical workers and in part by ambitious members who felt they could steer the union to new goals.

During the World War, the Brotherhood succeeded in widening its jurisdiction into the telephone field and in organizing many telephone operators. Rapid progress was also made in the railroads and in shipyards. However, a good deal of the new membership represented what might be called mushroom growth. Many workers joined the union because the policy of the United States Government at that time was favorable to unionism. They did not become union-minded, and when the war ended they ceased paying dues and dropped out of the organization. Nevertheless, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers emerged from the war period a stronger, more capable, and more resourceful organization.

ENLARGED SCOPE OF SERVICES, 1920-33

The third period in the life of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was characterized by the establishment of a workable policy of amicable relations between workers and employers in the electrical industry and by the expansion of union activities in the field of social or fraternal services to its membership.

Stabilizing Labor Relations. For a number of years and especially since the World War, the electrical workers' union has been very active in promoting harmonious relations between its members and their employers and between the union and other crafts in the building and transportation industries. In 1920, this constructive work of the union culminated in the establishment of the National Council of Industrial Relations for the Electrical Construction Industry. The object of the Council was to safeguard the electrical industry against the waste and suffering to labor and capital alike resulting from recurring strikes and lockouts. At the time of its organization, the Council adopted a number of basic provisions, for peaceful labor relations, among which the following referred to collective bargaining in the electrical industry:

1. The right of workers to organize is clearly recognized as that of any other element or part of the community.

2. Whenever agreements are made with respect to industrial relations, they should be faithfully observed.

3. Such agreements should contain provisions for prompt and final interpretation in the event of controversy regarding meaning or application.

4. Continuing agreements are recommended providing they contain provision for settling disputes and for composing differences arising from controversy by reference to disinterested and competent judges.

The National Council consists of an equal number of representatives of the union and employers in the electrical industry. It seeks to settle disputes between local unions and employers on the basis of facts and reason, and has been accepted by the workers and employers alike as the policy-making body for labor relations in the industry. Its success in establishing and maintaining peaceful relations is witnessed by the fact that this rapidly growing industry is now generally referred to as a "strikeless industry."

Reducing Hazards of Employment. Electrical work has always been a particularly hazardous occupation, and old-line insurance companies were therefore reluctant about insuring electrical workers. To meet this problem of safety and protection for its members, the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers concentrated its activities on two fronts — to reduce the hazards of the industry and to provide low-cost insurance for its membership.

In its study of injuries to electrical workers from accidents and occupational diseases, the Brotherhood found that accidents usually befell inexperienced and unskilled men. It therefore proceeded first to build a barrier against such accidents by educating its membership in the skills of the trade. In addition, it instituted a campaign for specialized training in the use of such mechanical safety devices as rubber gloves and safety belts to lessen the hazards especially of linemen and wiremen.

A special safety committee of the Brotherhood cooperated with Government and the industry in organizing the National Electrical Safety Code

and the National Electrical Code, both aiming to establish proper safeguards against hazards and to improve working conditions. The National Electrical Safety Code, under the sponsorship of the U. S. Bureau of Standards, sets up a careful procedure for the conduct of work on outside electrical jobs, principally overhead wiring. The National Electrical Code seeks to protect property against the hazards of fires resulting from electricity and in this way protects not only property but also human lives.

In addition to these two national codes, the electrical workers' union has sponsored the enactment of a large number of city ordinances intended to protect electrical workers against injuries from accidents. The agreements of the Brotherhood with individual companies also have special provisions for the safety and health of workers during hours of employment.

Life Insurance. In 1922, the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers organized the Electrical Workers' Benefit Association to provide low-cost life insurance for its members. For the sum of 90 cents a month, a member of the union is entitled to a life-insurance policy ranging from $300 after 1 year of continuous membership to $1,000 after 5 years of continuous membership. To date, the Electrical Workers' Benefit Association has paid out in life-insurance benefits more than $5,600,000. Its reserve fund exceeds $5,000,000.

Old-Age Pensions. In 1929, the Brotherhood took another step in setting up a pension plan for its members. It provides a monthly cash payment of $40 to all members reaching the age of 65 who have been in good standing in the organization for 20 years. The total amount paid out in pensions to date has exceeded the sum of $1,700,000.

Research Department. It was also during this decade of expanding activities that the research department of the Brotherhood was founded in 1924.* This was a departure from general union policies, the benefits of which have only recently become apparent.

The research department is the fact-finding division of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Through a system of up-to-date files on statistical and other data of current interest to labor, it keeps the officers and membership of the union informed on wage scales paid in different cities, on hours and working conditions, and helps the International and its locals in conducting wage negotiations.

EXPANDED JURISDICTION, 1933 —

The years of the prolonged depression after 1929 diverted the attention of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers from internal problems to a program of expansion to include all types of electrical workers in all branches of the electrical industry. As early as 1926, the electrical workers' union was faced with the problem of mass-production and technological unemployment. By referendum vote in 1933, the Brotherhood was authorized to extend its jurisdiction to include workers in the mass-production industries not previously eligible for membership. This step proved successful from the very beginning, and the Brotherhood now has a membership of approximately 200,000 skilled and semiskilled workers employed in the following branches of the electrical industry: Electrical construction, electric power and light, marine electricity, water power, transportation, railroads and aviation, manufacturing of electrical equipment and radios, radio broadcasting, and telephone and telegraph.

The electrical industry has been called the great revolutionist, inasmuch as it has ushered in an age of mobile power that can be transmitted over long distances, tending to bring about decentralization of our industries from cities to countryside and to smaller towns and communities. It cuts across all industries, and the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, like the industry, is also organized on a horizontal basis, serving the electrical industry itself and its various ramifications, where electricity and power are either generated or applied to use.

* *See March 1938* Labor Information Bulletin *for article by M. H. Hedges on work of research department.*

Workers' Education in the University of Wisconsin

E. E. SCHWARZTRAUBER, DIRECTOR
THE WISCONSIN SCHOOL FOR WORKERS

It is no innovation for the University of Wisconsin to cooperate in the work of the different social and economic groups in the State of Wisconsin. The University considers the interests and problems of these groups of great importance to the citizens of the State. In November 1938, for instance, President Dykstra of Wisconsin University invited the various industries in the State to avail themselves of the research facilities of the School of Engineering in the solution of their technological problems. The School of Commerce of the University often arranges special business courses intended in large part to aid businessmen in the solution of their individual and collective problems. The School of Agriculture is similarly conducted to benefit the farm communities of the State. The recent organization of a School for Workers in Industry as an integral part of the University thus merely represents an extension of the social functions of the University to workers and their organizations.

The School for Workers in Industry is based upon the assumption that the trade-union movement in the United States has become an accepted institution in modern industrial relations and that collective bargaining constitutes a normal relationship between employers and workers. One of the objectives of the school is, therefore, to aid workers to bargain collectively with their employers on the basis of an intelligent and informed approach to their problems. At the same time, it helps organized labor and employers in substituting proper labor relations for industrial warfare. In a larger sense, the school aims to help the individual worker in improving his standard of living and hopes to impart to him a sense of his own worth and his rightful place as a builder and sharer in a better social order.

The School for Workers in Industry was organized as a department of the University of Wisconsin in June 1937, 1 month after the Legislature of the State of Wisconsin passed a law authorizing the Board of Regents of the University "to establish and maintain a School for Workers in Industry and provide for such courses of instruction and for such field instruction and supervision at such locations within the State as will be, in the judgment of the Board, of greatest benefit to workers in industry."

The administration of the school was placed in the hands of a committee of three faculty members appointed by the president of the University. The interests of labor are represented by a committee of three members selected by organized labor, which meets periodically with the University committee in an advisory capacity. The actual management and arrangement of the work of the School for Workers in Industry are vested in the hands of a director and assistant director, appointed by the Board of Regents.

The principal educational activities of the school consist of 6 weeks of summer resident study at the University in Madison and of 30 weeks of winter extension service brought to workers in their respective localities. The program of the school's activities is flexible and is designed to meet specific situations and needs of workers and their organizations. Teachers and students meet on a democratic, informal basis, and group participation and discussion almost entirely replace the traditional lecture method.

The courses of study center in those subjects that deal with immediate situations and problems of particular interest to workers and to the labor movement. Parliamentary law, or how to run a union meeting, labor problems and labor economics, collective-bargaining practices and procedures, consumer problems and consumer cooperatives, labor dramatics -- these are the usual courses in which workers are especially interested

and which therefore are predominant in the curriculum of the school.

RESIDENT SUMMER SCHOOL

Summer classes for workers were inaugurated in 1924, when eight women from industries located in Madison were placed in regular classes of the University summer session. The following year a separate summer school for workers with its own faculty was established. The University provides the salaries for the faculty from its own budget, and the local communities raise subscriptions to cover the expenses of the students.

For several years the summer school was attended only by women, recruited predominantly from among nonunion workers, and the students' funds were raised from groups outside organized labor. When the school became coeducational in 1928, union participation and support became stronger. Recently the outlook of the summer school has become decidedly "trade-unionist," with the students drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of organized labor.

In 1937, when the School for Workers in Industry was organized, the summer school became a part of the new institution. During 1938, 118 workers attended the summer session taking courses ranging in duration from the regular 6-weeks' term to 5-day institutes. In this way the work of the summer session was made sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of the students and the requirements of the different union groups participating in the work of the school.

The basic program of the summer school is, of course, the 6-weeks' regular session attended by students from a variety of unions. In addition to the regular courses, however, special courses and shorter institutes are arranged to suit the demands of specific union groups. Thus, for example, when a resident institute for the teamsters' union was held early in the summer of 1938, a specially prepared course in transportation economics was given. Members of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union studied the problems of their own industry in a 2-weeks' course given late the same summer. One of the union groups requested and received a course in dairy economics. A course in economics of the automobile industry has been given once in a resident short session and several times in evening extension classes in centers where the automobile industry is concentrated.

EXTENSION CLASSES FOR WORKERS

In addition to its summer program, the School for Workers in Industry has a staff of about 25 teachers to conduct weekly classes for industrial workers in the different cities of the State. The services of the University are thus brought directly into the community where these services are desired. The University regards such direct services to the citizens of the State as a part of its educational function, and the work of the School for Workers in Industry thus fits solidly into the tradition of the University.

The classes for industrial workers are composed of students drawn almost exclusively from among the trade-unions in the State, and attendance ranges between 700 and 1,000 per week. The response of labor to this work of the University can best be illustrated by the fact that requests for workers' classes have always exceeded the facilities made available by the University.

During the three terms of the 1937-38 academic year, the School for Workers in Industry conducted more than 200 workers' education classes in 30 industrial centers in Wisconsin. Many of these classes were continuous throughout the year, in the sense that they retained the same student membership week after week, although different courses were taught and often by different teachers.

The classroom facilities for these courses varied with the community served. Central locations and locations easily accessible to industrial workers were generally preferred. Sixty-six of the 217 classes conducted in 1937-38 met in high schools or vocational school buildings, 63 in labor halls, 35 in libraries, 24 in rented rooms, 12 in city halls, and 17 in private homes.

Of the nearly 1,650 students who attended these courses, more than 1,200 were members of trade-unions, about 300 were nonunion workers, and

20 were members of the Workers' Alliance and 107 of women's auxiliary organizations. Thirty percent of all the students were employed in 11 mass-production industries, 27 percent in 25 miscellaneous crafts, 16 percent in 11 service trades, 14 percent in 6 building trades, 7 percent in 5 needle trades, and the remaining 6 percent were employed in transportation and other trades.

Rural Extension Work. The work of the school in rural communities is carried out largely with the aid of funds supplied by the Federal Government through regular W. P. A. projects sponsored by the school. The methods used in providing for the educational needs of farmers are somewhat similar to those used in the case of the city workers. Some 30 teachers meet weekly with a total of approximately 1,000 farmers in classes covering farm economics and other social problems of interest to farmers and agricultural workers. Classes are held in about 100 communities scattered over 23 counties in the State of Wisconsin.

Libraries and Radio. One of the most encouraging accomplishments of the School for Workers in Industry has been the interest developed among workers of Wisconsin in utilizing the services offered by libraries. The demand for books and pamphlets by workers has been greatly accelerated in the past few years. Many groups have also been encouraged to build their own libraries, consisting largely of books, periodicals, government reports, union convention proceedings, and other items of interest to the labor movement.

The radio has been used by the School for Workers to expand its general program in workers' education. Weekly quarter-hour broadcasts, usually of the interview type, have been run regularly. Like other new techniques of education, the radio offers manifold possibilities of workers' education which can be coordinated with the other work of the school to expand the scope of its activities.

RESEARCH AND TEACHERS' TRAINING

It was understood from the outset that if the School for Workers was to become of real benefit to labor, it would have to establish an effective research department of its own. This department was intended to gather and select current material of interest to labor to be used by the teachers, to do substantial research work in the field of collective bargaining, and also to conduct intensive studies in the history of individual unions when such unions request classes for their membership.

Because of budget limitations, the research department of the school has had to function on a much narrower basis. For similar reasons the program of teachers' training for workers' education also had to be greatly limited, in spite of the serious lack of qualified teachers in the field. It is important to emphasize that teachers in workers' education must not only have the usual qualifications required of teachers, such as adaptability, imagination, and skill in leading discussions, but they must also have a thorough understanding of the labor movement and of the aims and functions of collective bargaining and various other trade-union activities. It is indeed an accident to find a person qualified academically who also has had experience in the labor movement. Only through careful research work and proper teachers' training can this deficiency be corrected.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

The School for Workers in Industry of the University of Wisconsin is now closing the second year of its existence. The work already accomplished and the interest and good will the School has aroused among the nearly 200,000 organized workers in the State of Wisconsin would seem to indicate that this pioneer venture of the University of Wisconsin has made a valuable contribution to the field of workers' education. Other States and other universities are watching this experiment with interest. When accepted as a permanent part of the State educational program, the School for Workers in Industry should prove of genuine service to the welfare of organized labor and the citizens of the State of Wisconsin.

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Union Activities and Labor Relations in 1938

FLORENCE PETERSON
BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Despite declines in production and employment, organized labor concluded the year 1938 in a stronger position as to membership and agreements in force than at the close of 1937. Its major task during 1938 was that of forestalling wage cuts -- a task quite different from 1937 when a rise in volume of production and larger business profits facilitated the efforts of workers to obtain higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions. Although some reductions in wages did occur, especially in smaller plants, existing wage scales were on the whole successfully maintained in the mass-production industries and on the railroads.

Membership organization work continued during the year, though on a more limited basis and without the aid of large staffs of field organizers. The work was accompanied by intensive educational programs designed to instruct members on the aims and responsibilities of their trade-union. As business conditions improved and reemployment started in the latter part of 1938, seniority rules proved very effective in protecting union members against discrimination. Former union members returning to their jobs were thus encouraged to resume active participation in their unions.

UNION MEMBERSHIP

More wage earners belonged to bona fide national and international labor organizations in 1938 than at any other time in the history of the country. The combined membership reported by the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations was nearly 7½ million. The membership of the railroad brotherhoods and other independent unions not affiliated with either the A. F. of L. or the C. I. O. raised the total number of workers belonging to unions to more than 8,000,000.

The most marked gains in union membership occurred in the electrical industry, canneries, machine trades, motor transportation, packing houses, bakeries, laundries, hotels and restaurants, retail trade, and certain sections of commercialized agriculture. Considerable increase in union activities was also reported among clerical and professional workers, such as actors, insurance agents, State and county employees, teachers, and newspaper reporters.

Little union headway was reported among the industries where resistance to organized labor had been most pronounced in 1937. These unorganized fields included a few of the smaller and medium-sized steel companies, agricultural operations on the West Coast and in the South, and some southern sections of the lumber, tobacco, and other industries.

COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS

The industries operating almost entirely under written union agreements in 1938 included coal mining, railroad train and engine service, breweries, flat glass, newspaper printing, and men's and women's clothing. Musicians, actors, and radio artists and performers were nearly all working under collective-bargaining agreements. The automobile industry, with the exception of the Ford Motor Co., was largely under union contracts, as were a majority of plants in the steel and rubber industries.

Relatively little and in some instances practically no collective bargaining prevailed in agriculture, aircraft manufacturing, chemicals, iron mining, quarrying, retail and wholesale trade, and most of the services, including office and professional work and domestic service.

Wide sectional differences in the extent of unionization also prevailed in a number of

PREVALENCE OF WRITTEN UNION AGREEMENTS IN VARIOUS INDUSTRIES, 1938

Almost entirely under written agreements

Breweries
Clothing, men's (outerwear and furnishings)
Clothing, women's (outerwear and underwear)
Coal mining
Furs
Glass (window, plate, and other flat glass)
Musicians*
Newspaper printing and publishing
Performers (legitimate stage, vaudeville, burlesque, grand opera, motion pictures, and radio)
Railroad train and engine service

Large proportion under written agreements

Aluminum (refining and fabrication)
Automobiles and parts
Book, magazine, and job printing and publishing
Building construction*
Cement manufacture
City passenger transport (street railway, bus, subway)
Electrical equipment (includes radios)
Hats and millinery
Iron and steel
Longshore
Machinery and parts
Maritime transport (licensed and unlicensed personnel)
Motion-picture production (except actors)
Railroad clerical service
Railroad shops and maintenance
Rayon yarn
Rubber (tires, inner tubes, boots, shoes, etc.)
Stoves
Tailors (merchant tailors employed in retail trade)

About half under written agreements

Baking (bread, cracker, and cake -- also route salesmen)
Bus transport, intercity
Glassware
Hosiery
Metal mining, nonferrous
Petroleum (crude production and refining)
Shipbuilding and repairs (private shipyards)
Shoes
Silk and rayon textiles
Trucking (city and intercity -- excludes route salesmen)
Upholstering and floor covering (retail trade)

Moderate proportion under written agreements

Barbers*
Brick and clay products (includes pottery and chinaware)
Butchers (employed in retail trade)
Canning (vegetable, fruit, fish, etc.)
Cigars and cigarettes
Cleaning and dyeing
Coke and manufactured gas
Cotton textiles and small wares
Dyeing and finishing textiles (excluding hosiery)
Fishing
Flour and other grain products
Furniture (wood, upholstered and metal)
Hotels and restaurants*
Jewelry and silverware
Leather (tanning and leather products other than shoes)
Light and power
Lumber and timber products (logging, sawmills, etc.)
Meat packing
Milk and other dairy products (includes route salesmen)
Newspaper offices (editorial, circulation, advertising)
Pulp and paper products
Sugar refining, cane and beet
Taxicab
Telegraph
Theater -- maintenance employees (picture-machine operators, ushers, stage hands, box-office employees)
Woolen and worsted textiles

Almost entirely without written agreements

Agriculture
Aircraft manufacture and air transport (includes airports)
Automobile sales and service (also gasoline stations)
Building maintenance (residential and office buildings)
Chemicals (paints, fertilizer, cosmetics, perfume, soap, explosives, drugs, and industrial chemicals)
Clocks, watches, and precision instruments
Confectionery
Domestic service
Hospitals and similar institutions
Laundries
Office, technical, and professional employees (excludes retail trade, theater, newspaper, railroad employees)
Quarrying and iron mining
Telephone
Turpentine and rosin
Wholesale and retail trade (sales, delivery, office)

** Conditions regulated in many cases by detailed written working rules not incorporated in agreements.*

industries. For example, the Atlantic and Pacific Coast longshoremen and seamen generally worked under union agreements, while on the Gulf Coast and Great Lakes agreements were the exception rather than the rule. The metal mining industry was much more strongly organized in Montana than in any other part of the country. Most union agreements in the air-transport, lumber, fishing, and canning industries were with companies on the West Coast, while organization of building-maintenance workers such as elevator operators was largely concentrated in New York and a few other large cities. Similarly, the hosiery industry in and around Philadelphia operated almost exclusively under union agreements; but in the South, and particularly in the seamless branch of the industry, few mills had agreements with their employees.

On the whole the attitude of employers toward collective bargaining during 1938 was varied. Some employers flatly refused to recognize the union or to sign written agreements after conferring with representatives of their workers. Other employers felt that open antagonism to unions was unwise and proceeded formally to meet the requests of their employees and sign an agreement, but failed in reality to carry out real day-to-day collective bargaining. Some made unusual efforts to improve plant working conditions and personnel policies with the hope that their employees gradually would lose interest in trade-unions. However, in a large number of cases management showed a sincere desire to fit their personnel policies within the framework of collective bargaining, although in some instances the demands of the trade-union seemed to conflict with what had formerly been considered good personnel practice.

STRIKES IN 1938

Small strikes, involving relatively few workers and continuing for a comparatively brief time, were most characteristic during 1938. The 2,772 strikes recorded by the Bureau of Labor Statistics during the year involved about 688,000 workers and resulted in approximately 9,000,000 man-days of idleness. There were 1,968 or 41.5 percent fewer strikes last year than in 1937. Only about one-third as many workers were involved, and the number of man-days of idleness was also only a third as large as in 1937.

The largest number of strikes (536) occurred in the textile and clothing industries. They

DISTRIBUTION OF STRIKES BY INDUSTRIAL GROUPS, 1938

INDUSTRY	NUMBER OF STRIKES	WORKERS INVOLVED	MAN-DAYS IDLE
All industries	2,772	688,400	9,148,300
Manufacturing			
Textiles	536	109,400	1,424,900
Foodstuffs	168	55,500	669,800
Lumber and allied products . . .	142	22,100	782,700
Iron and steel	85	29,400	397,000
Machinery and machine products .	85	21,200	580,300
Paper and printing	73	13,800	241,100
Leather	59	14,300	159,500
Transportation equipment	49	82,700	318,400
Other manufacturing industries .	240	61,900	1,241,800
Nonmanufacturing			
Wholesale and retail trade . . .	338	39,600	825,800
Building and construction	315	44,400	405,500
Transportation and communication.	211	76,400	720,000
Domestic and personal service . .	178	14,200	169,600
Extraction of minerals	63	37,500	529,200
Agriculture and fishing	48	24,300	410,000
Other nonmanufacturing industries	182	41,700	272,700

accounted for 19 percent of all stoppages recorded during 1938. Most of these strikes took place in small clothing shops in New York and were of short duration. Retail and wholesale trade experienced 338 strikes; building construction, 315; and transportation and communication industries recorded 211 strikes.

The average duration of strikes in 1938 was 23½ calendar days. More than one-third (37 percent) lasted less than a week, and about 23 percent continued for more than a month. Outstanding among the more prolonged stoppages were the dispute of San Francisco department-store workers, which ran from September 7 to November 1, and that of lumber workers in Bellingham, Wash., which began in July and was still in progress at the end of the year.

Two-thirds of all the 1938 strikes involved fewer than 100 workers each. About 1 out of every 4 strikes involved from 100 to 500 workers and 1 out of every 10 stoppages involved more than 500 wage earners. Only two strikes — in contrast with 26 in 1937 — involved more than 10,000 workers.

Unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor were involved in 50 percent of the strikes ending in 1938. These strikes involved nearly 243,000 workers. Unions affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations were involved in about 40 percent of the strikes. These disputes, mainly in mass-production industries, involved 377,000 workers.

Cause of Strikes. Recognition of the union, discrimination against union members, the closed shop, and other organization activities were the cause of half of the strikes in 1938. These stoppages included nearly one-third of the total number of workers involved in disputes and accounted for about 44 percent of the total man-days of idleness.

Controversies over wages and hours were the cause of 776 or 28 percent of all strikes. Over half of these disputes centered on wage increases, coupled in some cases with demands for shorter hours. Protests against wage cuts and longer hours were the major issue in the remaining strikes over wages and hours.

Slightly more than 600 stoppages, or about 22 percent of the total, were brought about by miscellaneous causes. A relatively small proportion (less than 6 percent) of all strikes centered about rivalries between unions or jurisdictional questions, and less than 1 percent were sympathetic strikes in which wage earners ceased work in support of other workers. About 15 percent of the strikes were due to grievances over working conditions and rules -- such as delayed pay, vacations, changes in work methods, increased work loads, or speed-ups.

Results. Workers obtained immediate substantial gains in about 40 percent of the strikes terminated in 1938. About 30 percent of the strikes resulted in partial gains or compromise settlements. The remaining strikes brought little or no immediate gains to wage earners, and some resulted in actual losses.

From the workers' point of view the chances for a successful strike termination are as a rule the greatest if the dispute is settled within a relatively short time. The 1938 data collected by the Bureau indicate that 45 percent of the disputes settled within less than a week were won by the employees, while of the controversies which lasted for 3 months or longer, less than one-fourth resulted in a substantial victory for the workers.

Method of Settlement. Direct conferences between representatives of organized workers and employers without outside aid resulted in the settling of about 44 percent of the strikes concluded in 1938. Most of these strikes involved a relatively small number of employees and continued for only a brief period.

Thirty-seven percent of the disputes (1,025), involving more than half of all workers, were adjusted with the aid of either Federal, State, or local government agencies or boards. The great bulk (989) of these strikes were settled by conciliation, and only a few were arbitrated.

Employment Problems of Older Workers

A committee composed of representatives of the public, labor, and industry was appointed by the Secretary of Labor in February 1938 to consider the difficulties experienced by older workers in finding employment and to suggest possible remedies. The report of this committee, recently transmitted to the Secretary of Labor, is summarized in the following article.

"Workers are not through after reaching the age of 40" is the unanimous conclusion of the Committee on Employment Problems of Older Workers appointed by the Secretary of Labor to study the problem of older workers in finding employment. "Any policy, private or governmental, which arbitrarily discriminates against employees or applicants on the basis of a fixed age is undesirable from the point of view of employees, employers, and the public as a whole and is not justified."

Older workers are, however, at the present time handicapped by the current general unemployment situation, by the prejudices of some employers, and by their own fears. Though seniority rules and general personnel policies are helpful to the older employees in retaining their jobs, they find real difficulty in securing new employment if they are displaced--whether by lay-offs, technological changes, plant mergers, shut-downs, or other impersonal causes.

The returns of the 1937 census of unemployment showed that men after reaching the age of 40 and women after the age of 35 begin to experience difficulties in finding new jobs and that their prospects for finding employment decrease as they approach the retiring age. These census data confirm the experience of private and public employment offices in locating jobs for older workers.

A study of employment and unemployment in Philadelphia revealed that unemployment lasted almost four times as long among men between the ages of 40 and 44 as among those between the ages of 20 and 29. Yet it is during the middle years of life that workers acquire the heaviest family responsibilities. Their lack of employment during this period means both deprivation and added burdens for the young.

The Committee found no valid social or economic reason for such discrimination against older workers, particularly when around the age of 40. Examination of available factual data on productivity, accidents, sickness, group insurance, and pension plans all indicate, the Committee points out, that the age of workers has little effect upon the costs of operating the plant. In many instances productivity of older workers was found to be greater than that of younger employees. This is especially true in industries where skill, based upon long years of experience, is in demand. The younger workers have the edge in productivity over older employees only in occupations primarily requiring physical strength and endurance. Even in such jobs the precise age at which the decline in productivity begins varies widely among different individuals, and any fixed age is unfair to many workers.

Most of the data on occupational injuries indicates that older workers have fewer accidents, although their injuries are as a rule more severe. The result, according to the Committee, is that the net cost of industrial accidents to the employer remains about the same regardless of the age composition of his workers.

Objections to hiring older workers, based on alleged increased cost of maintaining group life insurance and private pension plans, were likewise found to be untenable. The employers' share of the cost of group life insurance is ordinarily so small that it should not influence employers to establish hiring-age limits, according to the Committee, and such higher insurance rates as may be necessary can be met by proper allocation of the cost of premiums between employers and workers. Private pension plans can also be revised in the

light of recent Nation-wide legislation providing old-age annuities to most groups of workers. Since workers covered by the Social Security Act may now continue credits for these annuities when they change jobs, their final annuity or pension will depend upon their total working time in insured employment rather than on the length of service with a particular firm. This means that employers who hire older workers do not have to worry about retiring these workers on inadequate pensions or run the risk of bankrupting their own pension plans in order to pay adequate old-age benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE

Employment opportunities for older workers can be enlarged, according to the Committee, by cooperative action of trade-unions and management, by reexamination of hiring methods followed by employers, and by elimination of age requirements in Government employment.

With reference to agreements between trade-unions and employers, the Committee states: "We wish to call attention to the fact that employees themselves can help break down the prejudices against older workers and that in some instances the problem has been successfully dealt with through union contracts. We believe that unions and managements should cooperate fully in dealing with this problem."

Concerning employment and production practices of employers, the Committee urges and recommends that employers who have in the past adopted hiring-age limits, discontinue this practice. "We believe that those employers who have been swayed in their hiring policies by a preference for youth to the point of excluding the applicants over 40 from serious consideration should reexamine the basis of this preference in the light of this report, and scan their productive processes and work methods to determine what occupations are particularly suitable for the employment of older workers."

Finally, as a part of a general attack on the problem of employment for older workers, the Committee strongly recommends that the Federal Civil Service Commission and appointing officers of the Government abolish age limits for entrance into the Government service, except for positions requiring physical strength and endurance. "Although the Government provides a larger share of employment for older workers than private industry, nevertheless the practice of setting age limits in public employment does constitute an artificial and unjustifiable limitation and does set an undesirable example to private industry. We further urge appointing officers throughout the Government service in making appointments and reinstatements to do so solely on the basis of qualifications and without regard to age."

THE COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF OLDER WORKERS

Chester I. Barnard, President, New Jersey Bell Telephone Company
John D. Biggers, President, Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company
J. A. Brown, President, Socony-Vacuum Oil Company
Stephen F. Chadwick, National Commander, The American Legion
Elizabeth Christman, Secy-Treas., National Women's Trade Union League
Mary Dewson, Member, The Social Security Board
George M. Harrison, Chairman, Railway Labor Executives Association
Ruth Hill, Associate Director of Public Assistance, New York City Dept. of Welfare
Sidney Hillman, President, Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America
Dexter M. Keezer, President, Reed College
William S. Knudsen, President, General Motors Corporation
E. A. Millis, Chairman, Department of Economics, University of Chicago
Philip Murray, Chairman, Steel Workers Organizing Committee
Richard C. Patterson, Jr., Assistant Secretary of Commerce
A. W. Robertson, Chairman, Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company
Walter C. Teagle, Chairman of the Board, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey
D. W. Tracy, President, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
Robert J. Watt, American Worker Delegate to International Labor Organization

CHAIRMAN — *Harry Woodburn Chase*, Chancellor, New York University
SECRETARY — *Verne A. Zimmer*, U. S. Department of Labor

Business Profits and Losses in 1938

Despite a sharp rise in profits during the last 3 months of 1938, total net profits for the year as a whole were slightly less than half as large as in 1937. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reports that the aggregate net profits of 831 industrial and mercantile concerns, 141 class I railroads, and 82 public utilities were $1,249,700,000 in 1938, $2,583,100,000 in 1937, $1,111,000,000 in 1932, and $4,122,800,000 in 1929.

With the exception of the 10 aviation companies which established a new high record of earnings, all corporation groups included in the sample reported lower net profits or losses last year. The greatest declines occurred largely in durable-goods industries such as agricultural implements, automobiles, building materials and supplies, electrical equipment, machinery and tools, railroad equipment, and steel.

Total net profits in 1938 were about 12 percent larger than in 1932. Most corporation groups which registered losses in 1932 reported net profits last year.

NET PROFITS and LOSSES*

CORPORATION GROUPS	NUMBER OF COMPANIES	1929	1932	1937	1938
Total**	1,054	$4,122,800,000	$1,111,000,000	$2,583,100,000	$1,249,700,000
Agricultural equipment	9	81,900,000	*31,300,000*	74,300,000	38,000,000
Automobiles	13	327,200,000	*28,700,000*	254,800,000	104,100,000
Automobile parts and accessories	48	93,000,000	*22,000,000*	58,300,000	5,600,000
Aviation	10	4,100,000	*1,300,000*	5,800,000	12,200,000
Building supplies	66	140,300,000	*40,200,000*	107,200,000	37,800,000
Chemicals and drugs	43	197,200,000	71,700,000	188,700,000	114,200,000
Clothing and textiles	50	31,700,000	*26,600,000*	15,400,000	*1,300,000*
Containers, metal and glass	6	41,600,000	21,600,000	41,100,000	28,300,000
Electrical equipment	35	171,300,000	*22,300,000*	129,100,000	53,900,000
Food and food products	72	286,900,000	127,800,000	178,600,000	160,400,000
Household equipment	37	70,400,000	*6,800,000*	55,200,000	30,800,000
Leather and shoes	13	21,000,000	3,200,000	11,400,000	5,600,000
Machinery and tools	76	75,500,000	*31,000,000*	68,200,000	22,900,000
Mining	50	127,500,000	*5,500,000*	156,400,000	91,400,000
Motion pictures and amusements	12	55,800,000	*15,500,000*	47,400,000	30,800,000
Office equipment	12	45,800,000	*600,000*	38,300,000	21,300,000
Paper and paper products	26	20,100,000	*4,500,000*	21,800,000	11,200,000
Petroleum	40	166,000,000	4,300,000	162,100,000	73,100,000
Printing, publishing, advertising	16	18,800,000	700,000	10,400,000	7,400,000
Public utilities (Net income)	82	413,200,000	299,300,000	300,100,000	267,900,000
Railroads, class I (Net income)	141	896,800,000	*150,600,000*	98,700,000	*122,900,000*
Railroad equipment	18	63,400,000	*14,900,000*	46,900,000	1,200,000
Retail trade	62	192,200,000	31,500,000	158,400,000	132,500,000
Rubber and tires	10	34,100,000	*12,500,000*	26,800,000	22,600,000
Shipping and shipbuilding	11	11,800,000	*5,300,000*	*1,800,000*	*600,000*
Steel	33	369,200,000	*139,400,000*	212,700,000	1,600,000
Telephone (Net operating income)	91	*Not available*	190,900,000	226,800,000	209,800,000
Tobacco	16	105,000,000	113,800,000	88,000,000	83,900,000
Miscellaneous	47	61,000,000	*3,800,000*	28,800,000	15,800,000

* *Losses in italic type.* ** *Excludes telephone companies for which 1929 data are not available.*

What Happened to Prices in March 1939

Wholesale Prices. The general level of wholesale commodity prices declined slightly in March and was 3.8 percent lower than in March of last year. The same commodities which could be bought for $100 in 1926 cost $76.70 in March, $76.90 in February, and $79.70 in March 1938. This is revealed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics index of wholesale commodity prices which stood at 76.7 in March, 76.9 in February, 79.7 in March a year ago, and 100 in 1926.

INDEX OF WHOLESALE PRICES

ITEM	1926	MARCH 1939	MARCH 1938	INCREASE (+) OR DECREASE (−) MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939
		Index	*Index*	*Percent*
All commodities	100	76.7	79.7	- 3.8
Farm products	100	65.8	70.3	- 6.4
Raw materials	100	70.1	73.2	- 4.2
Semimanufactured articles .	100	74.6	75.6	- 1.3
Finished products	100	80.2	83.4	- 3.8

Retail Food Prices. Averaged for the country as a whole, retail food prices were slightly lower in March. They were about 3 percent lower than in March of last year. The Bureau of Labor Statistics price index of 84 foodstuffs sold at retail in 51 cities scattered throughout the United States stood at 70.4 in March, 70.8 in February, and 72.4 in March 1938. Based on 1926 as 100, this index indicates that a dollar's worth of foodstuffs sold at retail in 1926 cost on the average 70.4 cents in March, 70.8 cents in February, and 72.4 cents in March a year ago.

AVERAGE RETAIL FOOD PRICES FOR THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE

ITEM	RETAIL PRICE		INCREASE (+) OR DECREASE (−) MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939	
	MARCH 1939	MARCH 1938		
	Cents	*Cents*	*Cents*	*Percent*
Bread, pound	8.0	8.9	- 0.9	- 9.4
Butter, pound	31.5	37.0	- 5.5	-14.7
Milk, delivered, quart . . .	12.4	12.7	- 0.3	- 2.3
Eggs, dozen	29.0	29.2	- 0.2	- 0.6
Potatoes, pound	2.3	2.1	+ 0.2	+ 7.0
Lard, pound	11.0	13.6	- 2.6	-18.6
Pork chops, pound	30.2	31.9	- 1.7	- 5.3
Round steak, pound	35.8	32.1	+ 3.7	+11.4
Sugar, pound	5.1	5.5	- 0.4	- 7.0
Coffee, pound	22.8	23.6	- 0.8	- 3.3

Employment and Pay Rolls in March 1939

Greater seasonal activity in manufacturing and retail trade largely accounted for the increase of approximately 200,000 workers in nonagricultural employment in March. Total employment in industries other than agriculture in March was 360,000 larger than in March 1938.

Sixty-one of the 87 manufacturing industries surveyed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported increased employment as well as larger weekly wage payments. Altogether approximately 50,000 factory wage earners were rehired during the month. More workers had jobs manufacturing aircraft in March than at any other time in the history of the industry. Employment in the steel industry was at the highest level since February 1938, and foundries and electrical machinery plants reported more workers on their pay rolls than at any time since March of last year. In the machine tool industry employment rose for the seventh consecutive month.

The increase of 80,000 employees in retail trade was slightly greater than the average employment gain for this time of the year. Private building construction employed substantially more workers, and dyeing and cleaning establishments also enlarged their forces to handle increased spring business. Class I railroads added about 6,200 workers to their pay rolls during the month.

Among the declines in employment in March, a seasonal reduction in wholesale trade resulted in the lay-off of 13,000 employees. Reductions in employment were also reported in coal mines, metal mining, and crude petroleum producing.

ESTIMATED EMPLOYMENT AND PAY ROLLS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

MARCH 1939, FEBRUARY 1939, MARCH 1938

INDUSTRY	NUMBER OF WORKERS EMPLOYED			AMOUNT OF WEEKLY PAY ROLL		
	MARCH 1939	FEBRUARY 1939*	MARCH 1938	MARCH 1939	FEBRUARY 1939*	MARCH 1938
All industries	7,210,800	7,159,700	6,924,300	$164,945,000	$162,168,000	$146,320,000
Durable-goods groups:	*3,214,400*	*3,181,900*	*3,053,900*	*80,280,000*	*78,611,000*	*67,586,000*
Iron and steel	787,900	778,100	753,100	20,747,000	20,289,000	16,348,000
Machinery	838,600	827,100	858,000	22,472,000	21,876,000	20,970,000
Transportation equipment	539,300	540,400	436,100	15,854,000	15,802,000	11,206,000
Nonferrous metals	235,200	233,400	216,700	5,873,000	5,794,000	4,876,000
Lumber	569,600	569,600	566,900	9,865,000	9,701,000	9,481,000
Stone, clay, and glass	243,800	233,300	223,100	5,469,000	5,149,000	4,705,000
Nondurable-goods groups:	*3,996,400*	*3,977,800*	*3,870,400*	*84,665,000*	*83,557,000*	*78,734,000*
Textiles	1,652,200	1,649,000	1,547,900	28,192,000	27,812,000	24,707,000
Leather	315,700	312,500	304,700	5,812,000	5,819,000	5,351,000
Food	744,400	737,700	744,300	17,283,000	17,013,000	17,192,000
Tobacco	82,300	86,400	88,300	1,146,000	1,133,000	1,217,000
Paper and printing	562,400	562,400	559,200	15,489,000	15,207,000	15,058,000
Chemicals	379,200	371,600	381,400	10,079,000	9,927,000	9,718,000
Rubber	111,200	109,500	97,900	2,962,000	2,878,000	2,112,000
Unclassified	149,000	148,700	146,700	3,702,000	3,768,000	3,379,000

* *Revised*

Durable-Goods Industries. Approximately 32,500 more workers had jobs in the durable-goods groups of manufacturing industries in March. Compared with March a year ago, 160,000 more workers were employed in durable-goods manufacturing. The largest gains in employment over the 12-month period were 103,200 in transportation equipment and 34,800 in iron and steel.

Weekly pay rolls to workers employed in durable-goods industries in March increased nearly $1,670,000 and were $12,700,000 higher than in March 1938. The outstanding increases in total weekly wage payments over the year interval were $4,648,000 in transportation equipment, $4,399,000 in iron and steel, and $1,502,000 in machinery manufacturing.

Nondurable-Goods Industries. Employment in the nondurable-goods groups of industries increased by 18,600 in March. Approximately 126,000 more workers were engaged in producing nondurable goods in March 1939 than in March 1938. Textiles alone accounted for an increase of 104,300 workers over the year interval.

The total weekly wage payments to nondurable-goods workers increased by slightly more than $1,100,000 in March and were considerably higher than in the corresponding month of last year. Led by an increase of $3,485,000 in textiles, all groups with the exception of tobacco reported larger weekly pay rolls this March than in March 1938. The net increase for all groups combined exceeded $5,900,000.

TREND OF EMPLOYMENT AND PAY ROLLS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

The March rise of slightly less than 1 percent in the Bureau of Labor Statistics factory employment index was somewhat smaller than the usual spring increase. Employment in manufacturing industries this March averaged 4 percent above March a year ago and was higher than in any month since the fall of 1937. Based on average employment of 1923-25 as 100, the Bureau's index for manufacturing industries was 91.3 in March, compared with 90.7 in the preceding month and 87.7 in March of last year.

Factory pay rolls in March were 1.6 percent higher than in February. They averaged 12.6 percent higher than in March 1938.

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Factory Pay-Roll Index

1923-25 = 100

1939	
March.....	86.8*
February.....	85.4
January.....	83.2
1938	
December.....	86.6
November.....	84.1
October.....	83.9
September.....	81.0
August.....	76.8
July.....	70.6
June.....	70.8
May.....	72.9
April.....	74.6
March.....	77.1

* Preliminary

HOURS OF WORK AND EARNINGS IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

The average workweek of 37 hours reported by manufacturing industries in March was about the same as in the preceding month but 2½ hours longer than in March 1938. Average hourly earnings of approximately 65 cents were about the same as in February 1939 and March a year ago. Factory wage earners earned on the average $24.25 per week in March. This was slightly more than in the preceding month and approximately $1.80 per week more than in March of last year.

Weekly earnings:
- $31.10 in automobiles
- 28.80 in blast furnaces and rolling mills
- 27.00 in foundries and machine shops
- 19.60 in brick manufacturing
- 19.35 in sawmills

Average weekly hours of work and hourly and weekly earnings in the five selected nondurable-goods industries in March 1939 were--

HOURS OF WORK AND EARNINGS IN INDUSTRIES MANUFACTURING RUBBER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS

INDUSTRY	HOURS OF WORK			HOURLY EARNINGS			WEEKLY EARNINGS		
	MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: FEB. 1939 TO MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939	MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: FEB. 1939 TO MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939	MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: FEB. 1939 TO MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939
		Percent	*Percent*	*Cents*	*Percent*	*Percent*		*Percent*	*Percent*
Rubber manufactures:									
Boots and shoes . . .	36.0	- 4.0	+18.2	60.5	+ 0.7	- 0.2	$21.65	- 3.4	+18.0
Tires and tubes . . .	34.0	+ 2.3	+34.2	96.0	+ 0.3	+ 0.8	32.65	+ 2.7	+35.5
Other rubber products	38.5	+ 0.5	+11.6	60.0	*No change*	+ 0.5	22.90	+ 0.4	+ 9.6
Leather manufactures:									
Boots and shoes . . .	38.0	- 2.9	+ 6.9	49.0	+ 0.8	- 0.9	19.20	- 0.7	+ 3.1
Leather	39.0	- 1.2	+ 8.4	63.0	- 0.5	- 1.0	24.45	- 1.4	+ 7.3

In the five selected durable-goods manufacturing industries the average weekly hours of work and average hourly and weekly earnings reported in March 1939 were--

Weekly hours:
- 38.0 in foundries and machine shops
- 37.0 in sawmills
- 36.0 in brick manufacturing
- 34.5 in blast furnaces and rolling mills
- 33.5 in automobiles

Hourly earnings (in cents):
- 92.5 in automobiles
- 83.5 in blast furnaces and rolling mills
- 71.5 in foundries and machine shops
- 54.5 in brick manufacturing
- 53.5 in sawmills

Weekly hours:
- 40.0 in paper and pulp
- 40.0 in slaughtering and meat packing
- 36.5 in cotton-goods manufacturing
- 36.5 in petroleum refining
- 34.0 in tires and inner tubes

Hourly earnings (in cents):
- 97.5 in petroleum refining
- 96.0 in tires and inner tubes
- 69.0 in slaughtering and meat packing
- 61.5 in paper and pulp
- 38.5 in cotton-goods manufacturing

Weekly earnings:
- $35.15 in petroleum refining
- 32.65 in tires and inner tubes
- 27.30 in slaughtering and meat packing
- 24.45 in paper and pulp
- 14.05 in cotton-goods manufacturing

Hourly earnings were slightly higher this March than in March a year ago in each of the five selected durable-goods industries. Four of the five selected nondurable goods industries, on the other hand, reported slightly lower average hourly earnings in March of this year than in March 1938. In tires and inner tubes workers averaged slightly more per hour in March 1939 than in the same month a year ago.

With the exception of a slight decline in the weekly earnings of workers employed in sawmills, all 10 selected industries averaged higher weekly wage payments in March of this year than in March of last year. The gains over the year interval ranged from less than 1 percent in petroleum refining and slaughtering and meat packing to 30 percent in blast furnaces and nearly 36 percent in tires and tubes.

EMPLOYMENT, PAY ROLLS, WAGES, AND HOURS IN SELECTED NONMANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

	MARCH 1939*	INCREASE OR DECREASE: FEBRUARY 1939 TO MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939
RETAIL TRADE		*Percent*	*Percent*
Employment.....	3,276,600	+ 2.6	+ 0.7
Weekly pay roll...	$63,966,000	+ 1.9	+ 1.6
Weekly hours.....	42.5	- 0.7	- 1.0
Hourly earnings...	$0.55	+ 0.1	+ 2.5
Weekly earnings...	$21.70	- 0.7	+ 0.7
WHOLESALE TRADE			
Employment.....	1,401,200	- 0.6	- 2.0
Weekly pay roll...	$43,299,000	+ 0.3	+ 0.2
Weekly hours.....	42.0	+ 1.0	+ 0.3
Hourly earnings...	$0.70	+ 0.3	+ 2.8
Weekly earnings...	$29.50	+ 1.0	+ 2.3
METAL MINING			
Employment.....	67,100	+ 0.1	- 2.2
Weekly pay roll...	$1,758,000	+ 0.5	- 4.8
Weekly hours.....	40.0	+ 0.1	- 4.9
Hourly earnings...	$0.69	+ 0.4	+ 2.6
Weekly earnings...	$27.65	+ 0.4	- 2.7
BITUMINOUS COAL			
Employment.....	401,400	- 1.3	- 6.2
Weekly pay roll...	$8,633,000	- 3.8	+14.2
Weekly hours.....	26.5	- 2.9	+20.7
Hourly earnings...	$0.88	- 0.2	+ 0.6
Weekly earnings...	$23.55	- 2.6	+21.7
TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH			
Employment.....	394,000	+ 0.2	- 1.9
Weekly pay roll...	$13,332,000	+ 0.5	- 0.4
Weekly hours.....	39.0	*No change*	*No change*
Hourly earnings...	$0.82	+ 0.3	+ 0.8
Weekly earnings...	$30.90	+ 0.3	+ 1.5

	MARCH 1939*	INCREASE OR DECREASE: FEBRUARY 1939 TO MARCH 1939	INCREASE OR DECREASE: MARCH 1938 TO MARCH 1939
HOTELS		*Percent*	*Percent*
Employment.....	270,500	+ 0.1	- 0.7
Weekly pay roll...	$4,022,000	- 2.1	+ 0.2
Weekly hours.....	46.5	- 0.3	- 2.0
Hourly earnings...	$0.32	- 1.9	+ 1.9
Weekly earnings...	$15.10	- 2.2	+ 0.9
POWER & LIGHT			
Employment.....	286,700	*No change*	- 2.6
Weekly pay roll...	$9,202,000	+ 0.4	- 1.9
Weekly hours.....	40.0	+ 1.0	- 0.9
Hourly earnings...	$0.85	- 0.5	+ 1.9
Weekly earnings...	$33.80	+ 0.4	+ 0.8
ELECTRIC RAILROADS			
Employment.....	185,600	+ 0.3	- 1.8
Weekly pay roll...	$6,029,000	+ 0.9	+ 0.9
Weekly hours.....	45.5	+ 0.7	+ 1.2
Hourly earnings...	$0.71	- 0.3	+ 1.2
Weekly earnings...	$33.10	+ 0.6	+ 2.7
LAUNDRIES			
Employment.....	214,700	+ 0.2	- 2.0
Weekly pay roll...	$3,452,000	+ 0.9	+ 1.0
Weekly hours.....	42.5	+ 0.3	+ 0.4
Hourly earnings...	$0.42	+ 0.3	+ 2.1
Weekly earnings...	$17.55	+ 0.7	+ 3.0
DYEING & CLEANING			
Employment.....	55,900	+ 3.5	- 3.1
Weekly pay roll...	$978,000	+ 7.1	- 0.8
Weekly hours.....	41.0	+ 3.7	+ 3.2
Hourly earnings...	$0.49	+ 0.9	- 0.8
Weekly earnings...	$19.50	+ 3.4	+ 2.4

* *Preliminary*

Business and Economic Conditions in March 1939

AGRICULTURE

Farm Income. Cash income of farmers from the sale of farm products in March totaled $487,000,000 according to the Department of Agriculture. This compares with $430,000,000 in February 1939 and $512,000,000 in March a year ago. Government payments to farmers aggregated $95,000,000 in March, as against $56,000,000 in February and $60,000,000 in March 1938.

For the first quarter of 1939 the total farm cash income including Government payments was $1,495,000,000 or 5 percent less than for the first 3 months of last year.

Farm Wages. For the country as a whole, wages of farm hands receiving board averaged $27.10 per month during the quarter ending April 1, 1939, compared with $27.60 for the 3 months ending April 1, 1938, and $22.10 per month for the 5 years 1910-14. The monthly wages of farm laborers not receiving board were, according to reports from the Department of Agriculture, approximately $35.40 for the period ending April 1, 1939, $33.80 for the first quarter of last year, and $29.20 as the average for the period 1910-14.

INDUSTRY AND TRADE

Activity at steel mills increased slightly in March, but production of automobiles and lumber did not record the advance usual for this season. Output of nondurable-goods continued at about the same level which has prevailed since last autumn. Woolen mills were less active, but cotton mills and shoe factories maintained a relatively high rate of operations. Meat-packing establishments and sugar refineries reported increased production. As a result the Federal Reserve Board's adjusted index in March remained at the same level as in February. It was 98 in these months, compared with 79 in March 1938 and 100 as the average for 1923-25.

FEDERAL RESERVE BOARD

Industrial Production

ADJUSTED INDEX
1923–25 = 100

1939	
March.....	98*
February....	98
January.....	101
1938	
December....	104
November....	103
October.....	96
September...	90
August.....	88
July.....	83
June.....	77
May.....	76
April.....	77
March.....	79

* *Preliminary*

Automobiles. Approximately 371,900 passenger cars and trucks were assembled in March. This compares with 297,800 cars and trucks in February and 221,800 in March 1938.

Bituminous Coal. Output of bituminous coal in March aggregated 35,300,000 tons--approximately 1,400,000 tons more than in February and 8,550,000 tons more than in March a year ago.

Building Construction. The value of building permits issued in 2,131 cities increased from $147,980,000 in February to $175,400,000 in March. The value of permits issued for construction work in these cities this March was about 44 percent higher than in March 1938.

Electric Power. Output of electric power in March was estimated at 10,360 million kilowatt hours, compared with 9,459 million kilowatt hours in the preceding month and 9,321 million kilowatt hours in March of last year.

Railroad Freight Car Loadings. Class I railroads loaded on the average about 597,600 cars per week in March, as against 574,300 cars per week in February and 555,700 cars per week in March a year ago.

Steel. March output of steel ingots totaled approximately 3,365,000 tons. This was an increase of 410,000 tons over February and of 1,350,000 tons compared with March 1938.

Government Employment and Relief in March 1939

Employment in the Federal Service. About 1,231,000 persons were employed in the Federal Government service in March. Of this number 769,100 were in the executive service (excluding 109,600 force-account, supervisory, and technical employees included under construction projects below), 34,800 in the military, 5,290 in the legislative, and 2,320 in the judicial service.

P. W. A. Construction Projects. The number of workers employed at the site of construction on projects financed by the Public Works Administration rose from 216,600 in February to 222,100 in March. Wage payments to these workers totaled approximately $16,500,000 in February, as against $16,375,000 in March.

Other Federal Government Construction Projects. Employment on projects financed by regular appropriations, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, and the U. S. Housing Authority provided work for 177,600 persons in March. They earned during the month nearly $19,000,000.

The Works Program. Projects financed by the Works Progress Administration other than emergency conservation work, student aid, and that part of P. W. A. work financed by The Works Program provided work to 3,267,000 persons in March. Total wages to the workers employed during the month amounted to nearly $166,500,000.

Emergency Conservation Work. The number of enrolled workers, camp supervisors, and instructors employed in the Civilian Conservation Corps declined from 337,200 in February to 315,000 in March. Wage disbursements decreased from about $14,790,000 in February to $14,200,000 in March.

General Relief. Reports to the Social Security Board from 109 urban areas indicate that approximately 900,700 families and single persons received nearly $27,000,000 in general relief in March. Compared with the preceding month, this was an increase of about 2 percent in cases and of 4 percent in disbursements.

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